

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Trafford Pandemic Scrutiny Committee
Date: 22/09/2020
Report for: Information
Report of: The Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services.

Report Title

Return to school update

Summary

This report provides an update for the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee on the numbers of children returning to school following the end of the summer holidays. The report provides detail as to levels of attendance at school and early years, the levels of COVID cases, the support available for schools and settings, funded support, and Trafford's position regarding transport for Children and Young people.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee note the report.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name:
Extension:

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few months, officers from across the Council have been working with education leaders to provide guidance, tools and support on the measures to be taken to reduce the spread of infection in schools and prepare for a full-reopening of schools. This has included regular communication, virtual meetings with Head teachers and school leaders with responsibility for different roles across different phases and partnerships, school governors and Trade Unions. The Council has provided model policy documents, templates for risk assessments, staff risk assessments, step by step guidance on response to infection, regular HR and Health and Safety advice and direct support for individual schools. In addition, over 600 laptops have been distributed to all vulnerable children made known to us.

The DfE initially issued guidance in July 2020 setting out the Government's plan for all children and young people to return to school and college in September 2020. The expectation is that pupils attend school full time. Current restrictions on group sizes are lifted to allow this to happen although COVID-19 secure measures will remain in place to reduce the risk of transmission. This means that schools will be required to keep children in class or year group sized "bubbles". Schools must determine what constitutes a group or 'bubble' within their school and ensure that each bubble as far as possible does not mix with another bubble.

A. RETURN TO SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE DETAIL

School attendance from September will become compulsory again (with the exception of children who are electively home educated). From September 2020, schools are required to once again record attendance and respond to absence including issuing sanctions such as issuing fixed penalty notices where appropriate. Where a pupil is unable to attend school due to clinical or Public Health advice, they should be able to access remote education and not be penalised for non-attendance.

All Trafford schools have made a successful return to school. We can access the DfE Attendance Portal to assess the current position in schools but as this is not mandatory, we do not have a complete dataset.

However, what it is showing is an overall attendance rate of 90% which is above the national average, and we have reported to schools the ambition to obtain 96% as is normally expected. The data is also showing 87% of pupils with an EHC plan are attending and 85% of those pupils with a social worker.

ELECTIVELY HOME EDUCATED

We continue to monitor the growth in parents requesting to Electively Home Educate their children. As is replicated nationally, we are seeing an increase in requests as detailed below:

	2020/21	19/20
September Cases	39	9

Overall, the number of EHE children and young people is 149. We anticipated a spike due to Covid and have changed our information for parents (and schools) to urge any parent considering EHE to ensure that they make a fully-informed decision before removing the child from roll at a school.

B. EARLY YEARS

There are 5045 children now attending Early Years settings. This is an increase of 1000 from the start of the summer holidays.

100% of nurseries/ group settings and 84 % of childminders are open.

We are aware of concerns for the Out of School Club sector as they are reporting a decrease in parental demand and there are some challenges to manage the bubbles, therefore this term may be a critical time for businesses of this nature.

C. COVID CASES

Daily SITREPs regarding COVID cases are being produced and circulated to members and ward councillors and currently we have 23 schools and 2 Early Years Providers affected (as of 18.09.20) The majority of cases are in primary schools (14), with 7 cases in the secondary sector and 2 in our special schools.

The number of children impacted by the need to isolate as a result of COVID cases is approx. 905 and 53 staff members, therefore the wider impact is significant. Remote learning is put into place during the 14 day isolation period.

Trafford's Public Health team have been invaluable in providing ongoing support through:

- Weekly data briefings
- Guidance for the management of cases including template letters to parents
- Question and answer sessions with school leaders
- Communicating any changes to procedure
- "Hand-holding" schools whilst managing positive cases

Despite the offer of a DfE Helpline for schools in the management of cases, schools have welcomed the continued support of our local PH team and this will be maintained.

All schools have received 10 testing kits which have been used to support families, and most specifically vulnerable families, who have not been able to access a test. Our school nurses are also working with schools in the event of a child refusing to have a test. More tests can now be ordered by schools.

Daily case reports will continue to be provided for members.

D. SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS

There has been significant support provided for schools and settings throughout the last few months in readiness for the return to school, including the following resources:

- √ Toolkit of support for full opening with links to relevant websites
- √ Operational details
- √ Curriculum development
- √ Formative assessment strategies to address lost learning
- √ Ofsted preparation
- √ Mental Wealth Toolkit
- √ Public Health Supplementary Guidance – planning for outbreaks
- √ Attendance guidance/ training
- √ Laptop allocation
- √ Safe travel back to school toolkits

We have continued to provide a wrap-around of support for each school which includes:

- ❖ Liaison Officer
- ❖ Educational Psychologist
- ❖ School Nurse
- ❖ Social Care contacts

We have maintained the locality SENCo clusters to ensure we continue to support our schools in meeting the needs of children and young people with additional needs and we will also be linking in with Trust Governor Services to provide information and support for Governing Bodies.

E. FUNDED SUPPORT

There have been a number of packages of funded support provided to schools:

1) Catch-up Funding

The DfE has allocated £650m additional funding to support pupils to catch up. Schools are to determine how best to use this one off funding for the 2020/21 academic year to ensure that pupils are able to make up for lost teaching time. This has been allocated to schools as follows:

Schools' allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis:

- Mainstream schools- £80 for each pupil in years Reception to Year 11
- Special and Alternative Provision - £240 for each place

In addition, the government has directly provided £350m funding for tuition from the National Tutoring programme which will be available for schools.

Schools leaders must be able to account for how this money is being used to achieve the aim of resuming a normal curriculum as soon as possible. Governors and Trustees should also scrutinise schools' approaches to catch up funding and ensure that its use is transparent to parents/carers.

2) Targeted funding for Reception pupils to help schools boost early language skills

£9m has also been allocated to Reception aged children to raise outcomes in speaking and language skills. The funding will provide schools with training and resources, helping them deliver one-to-one and small-group support for five-year-olds whose spoken language skills may have suffered as a result of the pandemic.

3) Wellbeing in Education Grant

The wellbeing for education recovery project aims to provide additional support to state-funded schools and colleges. This will enable education staff to promote and support the wellbeing and mental health of pupils and students as they return to full-time education. It takes the form of a new, nationally developed training package developed for education staff and funding for Local Authorities to appoint local experts to deliver the training into schools and Further Education (FE) providers during the 2020 autumn term, tailor it to the local context, and to provide ongoing advice and support until March 2021.

We have appointed 5 local experts from the Educational Psychology service, CAMHS and the Vulnerable Children's Service.

F. TRANSPORT

There were a number of challenges the Transport Unit faced at the start of the term, particularly in relation to the transport of children and young people with additional needs.

Challenges:

- Procurement processes meant that all runs needed to be recommissioned
- There continues to be some volatility in accessing personal assistants. The nature of the role means that they were typically older people and COVID has restricted their return to their position. We have worked with HR to support their safe return, but Occupational Health have deemed some of them unfit to return as it is challenging to create a COVID safe environment in a vehicle.
- We had a number of contractors who had not applied the specification appropriately which led to a small number of vehicles being the wrong size and some did not attend their runs at all. 35 runs were also knocked back by contractors at short notice. All of these issues, led to some families being let

down and having to make their own arrangements. We also requested support from schools where necessary.

Actions taken:

- Parents of children where runs were not appropriate were contacted and an apology was given. The team spent all day creating solutions to ensure amendments were made.
- Council staff stepped up and acted as PAs to ensure we had sufficient capacity in the interim. This will remain an issue, as PAs are cautious to attend work if not feeling well and we will have to work closely with parents and schools to source solutions.
- Members of the Family Information Service have provided additional telephone support to pick up calls in the office from 7am. Technology constraints mean we cannot redirect calls to other numbers. We will also ensure a generic communication is sent out to all parents